(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether Governments propose to reconsider this decision and permit them to appear in these examinations as before?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) The personnel below officers rank (PBOR) of Armed Forces are permitted to appear in Civil Services Examinations etc. However, the PBOR in the Air Force are permitted to apply for Civil Services Examinations after completion of 7 years of service including training period.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Acquisition of Fighter Aircrafts for IAF

802. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government had taken a decision to acquire 126 new fighter aircrafts for Indian Air Force;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that Government had taken a decision not to phase out the MIG's; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Government constantly review the security environment and accordingly decide to induct appropriate equipment and to make other arrangements for adequate defence preparedness.

(b) It would not be in the interest of national security to give details.

(c) and (d) As various aircraft complete their technical life or otherwise lose their utility, they are phased out and new aircraft inducted. Where possible, selective upgrades of the aircraft are carried out.

Purchase of Ship Chandlers for Indian Navy

803. SHRI AMAR SINGH:
SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that ship chandler purchases in the Indian Navy was made from middlemen instead of from the original equipment manufacturer at Visakhapatnam's Eastern Naval Command;

(b) if so, the details thereof and action taken against the officers concerned;

(c) whether it is also a fact that Indian Navy incurred a loss of several lakhs of rupees on account of procurement of substandard equipments for air conditioning plant in the logistic department; and

(d) if so, what action has been taken against the officials concerned?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (d) It is a fact that during 1993—1995, the Naval Headquarters had authorized Material Organisation Visakhapatnam to procure spares through Indian trade (ship chandler purchase).

A majority of the ships and submarines based at Visakhapatnam, acquired between 1967—1991, were of Soviet Union origin. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union (in August 1991), there was a breakdown in the supply of spares and components for these Soviet origin Naval Platforms. This was due to the non availability of information about the Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) in the erstwhile Soviet Union.

Before the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Navy's requirements of spares and components were being routed through two Soviet Government channelising agencies i.e., General Engineering Department (GED) and General Technical Department (GTD). The Indian Navy did not have a sufficient data base about the market prices of Soviet supplies, as before 1991 these were supplied on Friendship Prices', by GET/GTD.

Allegations of malpractices against ship chandler purchase were received by Naval Headquarters. These allegations were examined by the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) and also investigated by the CBI. However, no malafide in such purchases was established and the case was closed by the CBI.

During November 1995 an Indian Naval Ship had reported failure of air conditioning equipment whilst at sea. A Board of Inquiry was thereafter convened to investigate the allegation of procurement of substandard AC chillers. The Board of Inquiry did not establish any nexus and consequent malafide intent on part of the concerned individuals.

Re-examination of one-rank-one pension proposal

804. SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state: